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Litter in the Southeast of the United States

Littering is a type of pollution that harms the environment, the wildlife, and the economy. Litter is mainly misplaced garbage that comes from seven main sources: pedestrians, drivers, household garbage cans, commercial dumpsters, construction sites, demolition sites, loading docks, and trucks with uncovered loads (Union County Government). Littering pollutes neighborhoods, decreases property values, and destroys county’s natural beauty. Litter is something that overtime needs to be eliminated.

 What is the point of littering? There is no point. People harm the environment for no reason, and the only thing they get from it is a fine that they have to pay. The fines range between $175 and $1,000. Along with the fine people who litter have to serve up to eight hours in a litter abatement work program. Simple littering such as trash flying out of a pickup truck costs around $175 along with court costs (“Littering Enforcement”). Intentional littering such as somebody purposely throwing garbage out of a window onto the road could cost up to a $250 fine (“Littering Enforcement”). Somebody throwing large amounts of trash into a ditch or illegal dumpsite would cost a person between $500 and $1,000 in fines (“Littering Enforcement”). The amount of money people have to pay for littering is not worth throwing trash onto the streets and ditches of their community.

Alabama “The Beautiful” is a state that has some of the most litter in the United States. According to the “Alabama Litter Laws” brochure about 50% of litter is “accidently” deposited on our streets and highways (“Littering Facts and Statistics”). 96% of accidental litterers are males while only 72% of accidental litterers are female (“Littering Facts and Statistics”). The most popular type of litter is paper. Paper is 59% of the litter in Alabama with cans, bottles, plastic, and other debris following behind it. Only 40% of litter is from vehicles while 60% comes from other sources (“Littering Facts and Statistics”).

 Overall in America, people have become aware of the harm that is caused by littering but it is still not stopping some people. Over 75 percent of Americans have admitted to littering over the past five years (“Littering Facts and Statistics”). Some of the most frequent litterers are the people who eat at fast food restaurants because when the people finish eating their food from the drive thru, they don’t have anywhere else to put the trash (“Littering Facts and Statistics”). An example of how litter ruins property is when a person is trying to sell a house the buyer sees less profit in litter-filled neighborhoods (“Littering Facts and Statistics”). People who want to start a family do not want to buy a house that is in a neighborhood full of litter. Also, when litter is dumped in certain areas it can kill or stunt plant growth (“Littering Facts and Statistics”). Along with killing plants, plant growth could cause disease in the plants which could kill the whole crop. Another disadvantage of litter is that it kills millions of fish, birds and animals when the species get tangled up in the litter. When they are tangled in garbage and cannot get out, the species die. Humans also could become severely ill from litter because litter carries germs which could easily spread to humans through rodents.

Litter clean-up costs local and state governments billions of dollars. Instead of spending that money on cleaning up litter, the money could be used to construct roadside rest areas, construct traveler information stops, or to repair the state’s roads and bridges. The pot holes that you always see in the roads also could be repaired with the money that we spend on cleaning up litter. Alabama expects to spend over six million dollars on litter clean-up this year. Instead of spending tax dollars on cleaning up litter, stop littering and save the money you spend on taxes for other things that need to be repaired.

The state of Alabama is ranked number seven for the least amount of work done to clean up litter in the United States. Litter is an environmental problem all over the United States, but it is especially severe in the southern states. According to the study, seven of the top ten states with the worst records of litter are below the Mason- Dixon Line. Once people start to realize how bad and destructive littering is, the economy will get better.

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